

laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs pertaining to veterans, dependents, and survivors.

(e) *Cancellation* means termination of authority to represent claimants.

(f) *Claim* means application made under title 38 U.S.C., and implementing directives, for entitlement to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, reinstatement, continuation, or increase of benefits, or the defense of a proposed agency adverse action concerning benefits.

(g) *Claimant* means a person who has filed a written application for determination of entitlement to benefits provided under title 38 U.S.C., and implementing directives.

(h) *Recognition* means certification by the Department of Veterans Affairs of organizations to represent claimants.

(i) *Representative* means a person who has been recommended by a recognized organization and accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(j) *State* includes any State, possession, territory, or Commonwealth of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

(k) *Suspension* means temporary withholding of authority to represent claimants.

[53 FR 52419, Dec. 28, 1988]

§ 14.628 Recognition of organizations.

Authorized officers of an organization may request recognition by letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(a) *National organization.* An organization may be recognized as a national organization if:

(1) It was recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs prior to October 10, 1978, and continues to satisfy the requirements of § 14.628(d) of this section, or

(2) It satisfies the following requirements:

(i) Requirements set forth in paragraph (d) of this section, including information required to be submitted under paragraph (e) of this section;

(ii) In the case of a membership organization, membership of 2,000 or more persons, as certified by the head of the organization;

(iii) Sizable number of claimants for which powers of attorney for claim representation are held;

(iv) Present capability to represent claimants before the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, DC; and

(v) Geographic diversification, i.e., sizable number of chapters or offices in more than one State.

(b) *State organization.* An organization created by a State government for the purpose of serving the needs of veterans of that State may be recognized. Only one such organization may be recognized in each State.

(c) *Other organization.* An organization other than a State or national organization as set forth in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section may be recognized when the Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that it is a veterans' service organization primarily involved in delivering services connected with either title 38 U.S.C., benefits and programs or other Federal and State programs designed to assist veterans. The term *veteran* as used in this paragraph shall include veterans, former armed forces personnel, and the dependents or survivors of either. Further, the organization shall provide responsible, qualified representation in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for title 38 U.S.C., benefits.

(d) *Requirements for recognition.* In order to be recognized under paragraph (a) or (c) of this section the organization shall:

(1) Have as a primary purpose services to veterans; and

(2) Demonstrate a substantial service commitment to veterans either by showing a sizable organizational membership or by showing performance of those veterans' services to a sizable number of veterans; and

(3) Commit a significant portion of its assets to veterans' services; and

(4) Establish either that complete claims service will be provided to each veteran requesting representation, or shall give written notice of any limitation in its claims service with advice concerning alternate service. Complete claims service includes the ability to assure representation before the Board

of Veterans Appeals. However, representation before the Board of Veterans Appeals may be provided by agreement with another organization recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(5) Take affirmative action, including training and monitoring of its accredited representatives, to ensure proper handling of claims.

(e) *Information to be submitted by organizations requesting recognition.* In order for an organization to be recognized under paragraphs (a) or (c) of this section, the following information shall be supplied:

(1) *Purpose.* A statement outlining the purpose of the organization, the extent of services provided, and the manner in which veterans would benefit by recognition.

(2) *Service commitment.* (i) The number of members and number of posts, chapters, or offices and their addresses; and

(ii) A copy of the articles of incorporation, constitution, charter, and by-laws of the organization, as appropriate; and

(iii) The type of title 38 U.S.C., services performed or to be performed, with an approximation of the number of veterans and dependent clients served by the organization in each type of service designated; and/or

(iv) The type of services, if any, performed in connection with other Federal and State programs which are designed to assist former armed forces personnel and their dependents, and an approximation of the number of veteran and dependent clients served by the organization under each program designated.

(3) *Assets.* (i) A copy of the last financial statement of the organization indicating the amount of funds allocated for conducting veterans' services; and

(ii) A statement indicating that use of the organization's funding is not subject to limitations imposed under any Federal grant or law which would prevent it from representing claimants before the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(4) *Training.* (i) A statement of the skills, training, and other qualifications for handling veterans' claims of paid or volunteer staff personnel; and

(ii) A plan for recruiting and training qualified claim representatives, including the number of hours of formal classroom instruction, the subjects to be taught, the period of on-the-job training, a schedule or timetable for such training, the projected number of trainees for the first year, and the name(s) and qualifications of the individual(s) primarily responsible for the training.

(5) *Complete claims service.* (i) The record of representation before a discharge review board, or other proof of ability to represent claimants before the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(ii) Proof of capability of provide representation before the Board of Veterans Appeals; or

(iii) Proof of association or agreement for the purpose of representation before the Board of Veterans Appeals with a recognized service organizations, or the proposed method of informing claimants of the limitations in service that can be provided, with advice concerning alternative service.

(6) *Supervision.* The organization shall execute an agreement which states that it shall take affirmative action, including training and monitoring of its accredited representatives, to ensure proper handling of claims.

(7) *Other.* (i) A statement that neither the organization nor its accredited representatives will charge or accept a fee or gratuity for service to a claimant and that the organization will not represent to the public that Department of Veterans Affairs recognition of the organization is for any purpose other than claimant representation;

(ii) The names, titles, and addresses of officers and the officials authorized to certify representatives; and

(iii) The names, titles, and addresses of full-time paid employees who are qualified to act as accredited representatives.

(f) *Recognition or denial.* A notice of the Secretary's determination on a request for recognition will be sent to an organization within 90 days of receipt of all information to be supplied. The notice will state that recognition is solely for the purpose of claimant representation before the Department of

Veterans Affairs. If recognition is denied an organization, the Department of Veterans Affairs will set forth an explanation of the reasons for denial. A denial of recognition may be appealed to the Secretary within 90 days of the denial. The Department of Veterans Affairs will consider the appeal within 30 days of receiving such request. The organization will have an opportunity to fully document its position, and the appeal will cover all aspects of the application for recognition and the denial.

(g) *Requests for further information.* The Secretary or the Secretary's designee may request further information from any recognized organization, including progress reports, updates, or verifications.

(Information collection requirements contained in paragraph (e) were approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900-0439).

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501(a), 5902)

[53 FR 52419, Dec. 28, 1988, as amended at 57 FR 33878, July 31, 1992]

§ 14.629 Requirements for accreditation of representatives, agents, and attorneys.

The Regional Counsel will resolve any question of current qualifications of a representative, agent, or attorney. The claimant; the representatives, agent, or attorney, or an official of the organization for which such person acts; or the appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs officials may appeal such determination to the General Counsel.

(a) *Representatives.* A recognized organization shall file with the Office of the General Counsel Department of Veterans Affairs Form 2-21 (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative) for each person it desires accredited as a representative of that organization. In recommending a person, the organization shall certify that the designee:

(1) Is of good character and reputation; and

(i) Has successfully completed a Department of Veterans Affairs approved course of instruction on veterans' benefits; or

(ii) Has passed an examination approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or

(iii) Has otherwise demonstrated an ability to represent claimants before the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(2) Is either a member in good standing or a paid employee of such organization working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually; is accredited and functioning as a representative of another recognized organization; or, in the case of a county veteran's service officer recommended by a recognized State organization, meets the following criteria:

(i) Is a paid employee of the county working for it not less than 1,000 hours annually;

(ii) Has successfully completed a course of training and an examination which have been approved by a VA Regional Counsel within the State; and

(iii) Will receive either regular supervision and monitoring or annual training to assure continued qualification as a representative in the claim process; and

(3) Is not employed in any civil or military department or agency of the United States.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 303, 501 and 5902)

(b) *Agents.* Individuals desiring accreditation as agents must file an application with the Office of the General Counsel and establish that they are of good character and reputation. In addition, applicants shall pass a written examination concerning laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs which shall be prepared and graded in the Office of the General Counsel. The examination may be taken at any convenient Regional Counsel office under the supervision of the Regional Counsel. No applicant shall be allowed to sit for the examination more than twice in any 6-month period.

(c) *Attorneys.* (1) An attorney engaged by a claimant shall state in writing on his or her letterhead that the attorney is authorized to represent the claimant in order to have access to information in the claimant's file pertinent to the particular claim presented. For an attorney to have complete access to all information in an individual's records, the attorney must provide a signed consent from the claimant or the claimant's guardian. The consent shall